

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**

Chairwoman Speier, Ranking Member Gallagher, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of our Army's health professionals who support the Army's Soldiers, Civilians, and their Families.

People are the Army's most important asset and the high quality medical care and safety of our Soldiers and Families is my top priority. A strong, healthy, resilient Army is the most critical indicator of our readiness to deploy and win the Nation's wars. This Committee's investments combined with the Army's deliberate emphasis on medical readiness assures a ready, deployable, and lethal force.

My commitment as the 45th Army Surgeon General is to ensure the health of our people first and foremost. Maintaining the confidence of Soldiers and Families receiving care at military treatment facilities or at operational sites requires a dedicated Total Army Medicine Force, in partnership with the Military Health System. This results in the safest and most reliable healthcare organization in the world. I am steadfast in carrying out my mission to ensure the health of the force and extending our high reliability organizational mission to the operational environment. We are refining principles for sustaining our operational high reliability organization to strive toward zero harm. This is about maintaining trust in the care we provide.

The Army Medicine Commitment

Ready – My commitment for zero preventable harm in delivering medical care is unwavering. Taking care of our Soldiers, and our Families is at the core of our readiness. Army Medicine is a key enabler for a ready medical force—from the foxhole to the fixed facility. The military department operational units and the Defense Health Agency's (DHA) Medical Treatment Facilities are inextricably linked. The Medical Treatment Facilities are the premier readiness training platform for our medical personnel to hone and sustain their mission essential clinical skills and craft. The principles of patient safety and quality of care standardized in Military Treatment Facilities extend to the operational environment to the greatest extent feasible.

Responsive and Relevant – We are nested with both the Army and DHA to stay relevant and strengthen our coordination with key stakeholders. Army Medicine strives to create teamwork between DHA and throughout the Joint Staff and Combatant Commands. Simply stated, we are the Army’s key enabler of medical readiness. Our work to establish positive momentum in support of an integrated health system ensures readiness and meets the needs of our Soldiers and their Families.

Reformed and Reorganized – The Army transferred the authority, direction, and control of medical and dental treatment facilities to DHA in accordance with legislation and Department of Defense (DoD) guidance. We remain vigilant in our efforts to ensure quality and safety as we continue through this critical time of transition. We also continue to organize medical systems that align with the Army’s vision and objectives. While Army Medicine’s focus has pivoted to operational and deployed medicine, we are partnering with DHA and the other military departments in a collaborative spirit to deliver the best care for our People. To that end, I am deeply committed to my role as the Army’s medical integrator to ensure the standardization of quality health care and patient safety across the military health system.

Roles and Responsibility

My role and responsibilities follow multiple obligations to the Total Force in concert with DoD and Army regulatory policies. As the Army Secretary’s senior medical advisor and the medical integrator for the Army, I certify that our healthcare capabilities are ready and responsive to the needs of the Army and the Joint Force in providing expeditionary, tailored, medically ready, and ready medical forces to support the Army. Whether in a garrison or a deployed environment, Army Medicine strives for zero preventable harm events in delivering medical care across the entire medical enterprise.

Additionally, I ensure that the Army medical enterprise implements a Patient Safety Program and Health Risk Management consistent with DoD policy. I also exercise authority with respect to matters arising from acts or omissions of healthcare providers sanctioned by a Privileging Authority and under the responsibility of the Army. I further

exercise my authority in reporting providers to the National Practitioner Data Bank, State(s) of licensure, and applicable certifying or regulatory agencies, as appropriate.

The role of quality and safety practices across the operational force is evolving. Extending and refining quality and safety processes within the operational force enhances readiness.

The Army's patient safety harm reduction approach addresses, in part:

1. Eliminating error and maximizing benefits;
2. Committing all members of the healthcare team to first consider the risks and potential benefits of any clinical decision or action;
3. Maintaining an awareness of the state of systems and processes that affect patient care;
4. Standardization in guidelines and procedures to mitigate errors, reduce undesired variability, and identify opportunities for improvement;
5. Leaders supporting regular staff huddles to share information and engage in "walk rounds" to learn more about how they can help frontline staff improve care and eliminate harm in all environments;
6. Training and preparation;
7. A reluctance to simplify;
8. Respect for people; and
9. Fostering a culture of safety.

An added measure of reliability will be process improvement. Healthcare providers in the field will take the same lessons that have made Army Medical Treatment Facilities world-class and apply them at the point of injury. Since prevention of harm through the continuum of care impacts patient and staff safety, it is essential to the overall readiness of our service members.

The Army Medical Quality and Safety Process

We remain vigilant as we strive towards zero preventable medical errors. We seek to reduce harm through evidence-based guidelines enforcing standards. As such, Army

Medicine will continue to support and collaborate with DHA to achieve the Military Healthcare Systems' goal of zero preventable medical errors.

Leader engagement with medical teams is critical to the program's success. Army Medicine leaders are diligent in preventing medical errors. Army Medicine encourages a system-wide culture of advancing toward zero harm. We will continue to promote an integrated system in which every member is a problem solver capable of leveraging improvements in the Military Healthcare System. Through standing practices, Army Medicine works continually to improve the process of patient safety, quality, and transparency in collaboration with DHA and military departments which is essential to military readiness.

Conclusion

In closing, Army Medicine is committed to People first policies. We strive to deliver safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable, and patient-centered healthcare across the entire continuum of care to include the operational environment. Incorporating high-reliability guiding principles throughout the military health system, and emphasizing a culture of safety to eliminate preventable harm, is crucial to the health and readiness of our force and the success of our mission. I appreciate the Subcommittee's work and continued support to our Soldiers and Families and your long-standing support to Army and Military Medicine. Army Medicine is Army Strong.